



Environmental News

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Louisiana Meets New EPA Air Quality Standard for Small Particles

Louisiana joins the ranks of 30 states nationwide meeting EPA's new health-based standard for fine particle air pollution, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today. The new standard is part of EPA's national strategy to bring cleaner, healthier air to the nation.

Fine particles are those less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter and are also referred to as PM_{2.5}. These tiny particles – approximately 1/30th the size of a human hair – have been scientifically linked to serious human health problems including premature death from heart and lung disease, aggravation of heart and lung diseases, chronic bronchitis and asthma, increased hospital admissions and doctor and emergency room visits, and absences from work and school.

The reduction of fine particle pollution is a critical element of the Bush Administration's comprehensive national clean air strategy. This strategy includes a suite of Clean Air rules to reduce pollution from nonroad diesel engines and reduce pollution from power plants. These rules are important components of EPA's efforts to help states and localities meet the more protective national fine-particle and 8-hour ozone air quality standards. Together these rules will help all areas of the country achieve cleaner air. For more information on the clean air strategy, visit <http://www.epa.gov/cleanair2004/>.

"At each leg in the relay of bringing clean air to the nation, we are finding new and better ways to improve the environment and maintain our country's economic competitiveness. The fine particle standard will bring the kind of controls to smoke stacks that our other standards are doing to help eliminate that 'black puff' of smoke from tail pipes," EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene said. "I am especially pleased Louisiana joins the elite group of 30 states whose early action has been effective in bringing clean air to all of its communities."

More information about the fine particle rule and state attainment designations is available at <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations/>. Last Tuesday, EPA issued its Particle Pollution Report showing a 10 percent decrease in fine particulate pollution nationwide since 1999. The report is available at <http://www.epa.gov/airtrends/>.